

While our 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Agricultural Statistics Bulletin contains data that provides an accurate picture of agriculture in West Virginia during the year of 2003, I am also pleased to share with you some of the highlights from the 2002 Census of Agriculture, which was published in June, 2004.

According to the Census, West Virginia's **value of farm land and buildings** totaled \$4.8 billion in 2002, up 15 percent from \$4.2 billion in 1997. The **average per farm value** of farm land and buildings increased nearly 19 percent from 1997 to 2002 reaching a value of \$231,999. The **average value of land and buildings per acre** was up \$192 during the same time period to \$1,315 per acre in 2002. Other items of interest and the percent changes from previous Census: **Number of farms**, 20,812 farms in 2002, 21,531 farms in 1997, down 3 percent; **Land in farms**, 3,584,668 acres in 2002, 3,698,204 acres in 1997, down 3 percent; **Average size of farm**, 172.2 acres in 2002, 171.8 acres in 1997, up slightly; **Value of agricultural sales**, \$482,814,000 in 2002, \$459,387,000 in 1997, up 5 percent (crop sales accounted for \$69,693,000 of the total value in 2002, livestock sales accounted for \$413,121,000 of the total value in 2002); **Value of agricultural sales, average per farm**, \$23,199 in 2002, \$21,336 in 1997, up 9 percent; **Government payments**, \$5,180,000 in 2002, \$3,983,000 in 1997, up 30 percent.



**Dale R. King**  
**Director**

Additional interesting details from the 2002 Census of Agriculture: the average age of principal farm operators was 56.3 years (one percent of operators are under age 25 and 18 percent are 70 years and over); slightly over half of principal farm operators (50.5 percent) reported farming as their principal occupation; individual or family farms accounted for 95 percent of total farms; women accounted for 27 percent of all operators (data was collected on up to three operators per farm); for the principal or primary farm operators (one per farm) 89 percent are men and 11 percent are women; one percent of all farms accounted for 55 percent of agricultural sales (226 farms reported sales of \$263,293,000); the top five commodities by value of sales are: 1) poultry and eggs, 2) cattle and calves, 3) milk products, 4) nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod, 5) fruits and berries; the top five items in terms of production expenses are: 1) feed purchased, 2) livestock and poultry purchased, 3) supplies, repairs, and maintenance, 4) hired farm labor, 5) other production expenses; 23 percent of farms reported using a computer for their farm business and 40 percent reported having internet access.

Thousands of aggregated facts and figures for West Virginia can be accessed from our website at [www.nass.usda.gov/wv](http://www.nass.usda.gov/wv) by clicking on "Census of Agriculture". There are individual county profiles available on this website also. 2002 Census of Agriculture data for the U.S. and other states can be found at [www.usda.gov/nass](http://www.usda.gov/nass).

**A Special "Thanks" to all farm operators, agribusinesses, Cooperative Extension Service, Farm Service Agency, and Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel who provide information for our reports. Your contributions allow us to provide timely agricultural information, which help our allied industries meet the changing food and fiber needs of American - and world - consumers.**

I trust that the contents of this bulletin will provide a look at the importance of West Virginia agriculture. Additionally, I hope that you can see how agriculture is changing, find trends, and use this bulletin as a record of our history. As always, if you need any assistance with our reports, feel free to contact our office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dale R. King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dale R. King  
Director